

CERTIFICATION DEFINES LONG-TERM GOALS, DOUBLES
OUTPUT

ABOUT BELLWETHER INC. Bellwether, Inc. is a machine shop in McDonough, Georgia. In 1974, Robert “Bob” Jenkins was working in the carpet manufacturing industry when he realized need for better shuttle grippers, a specific part of the loom used to weave carpet backing. Together with his father, John Jenkins, Bob designed and manufactured a shuttle gripper that was superior to anything else on the market. They launched Bellwether in 1975, and the company grew to sell shuttle grippers to over 70 percent of the textile industry, in 31 countries. Later, as fabric formation technologies changed and demand for shuttle grippers decreased, Bellwether branched out to other industries, invested in advanced technology, and intentionally sought out contracts for parts that were difficult to manufacture. With around 20 employees, the company continues to take pride in its commitment to finding solutions for its customers.

THE CHALLENGE. In 2007, in response to requests from potential customers, Bellwether began to seek information on the ISO 9001 quality management system. They started working with the Georgia Manufacturing Extension Partnership at Georgia Tech (GaMEP), part of the MEP National Network™, to update their current system and prepare for certification. The economic downturn of 2008 forced the company to shift their focus to maintaining current customers, but after recovering from the downturn, Bellwether once again began receiving requests from customers for the certification. In 2015, company leaders decided it was time to finish the process. They reconnected with GaMEP and got to work making changes that would help them comply with the new ISO 9001:2015 standards.

MEP CENTER'S ROLE. Project managers at GaMEP met with Bellwether and assessed the steps required to pursue certification. Bob was excited to learn that the 2015 standard updates included an emphasis on improving the company's business plan and quarterly report structure. The team put together a plan to work on defining terminology, refining procedures, organizing paperwork, and training staff members on the new system. For nearly four months, a GaMEP project manager met weekly with Bob to discuss their progress and assign “homework” for him to complete the following week. Bellwether doubled its output of goods and services per man-hour worked, and a new, refined tracking system added metrics for supplier performance, follow up, safety compliance, and environmental impact. The company also developed cost control measures by documenting waste disposal and scrap recycling, and defined the qualities of valuable customers to attract the most profitable business.

"ISO 9001:2015 is a very relevant management tool and a credential that people are looking for, which made us want to complete certification as quickly as possible. Working with the GaMEP really expedited the process."

-Bob Jenkins, President

RESULTS



Increased output per hour by
100%



Developed metric tracking
system and added **4** metrics to
track performance



Developed new cost control
measures



Defined the qualities of
valuable customers

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